

**Summary of Testimony before the House Judiciary Committee
May 6, 2009**

Every Year the Wayne County Prosecutor's office handles approximately 75% of all the homicide cases in the State of Michigan. These cases include homicides where the defendant is a juvenile under the age of 17 at the time the crime is committed. The pending legislation seeks to change the sentence of defendants under the age of 17 who have been convicted of First Degree Murder and sentenced to life without parole. Based on the cases of defendant under the age of 17 at the time of the commission of the crime handled by the Wayne County Prosecutors Office in the last five years, this legislation seeks to address a problem that does not exist.

In the last three years the Wayne County Prosecutors Office has waived 100 life offenders cases where a juvenile under the age of 17 committed a life offense(Murder, CSC, RA, Carjacking). Of these cases, two juveniles were convicted of First Degree Murder and sentenced to life without parole:

1. Deante Hawkins. This was a 15 yr old who robbed Milt's BBQ restaurant and brutally murdered the owner, Milton Goodson. Hawkins shot the victim during the commission of the robbery, and shot him again as the victim lay on the floor. Hawkins was offered a plea bargain of 25-50 plus 2, but he rejected it and went to trial.
2. Keith Maxey. Maxey was 11 days short of his 17th birthday when he and an adult co-defendant robbed a drug house in Detroit. Before trial he was offered a plea of 12-30 to testify against the adult. He refused and was convicted of Murder1. After the verdict, but before sentence, he was offered 20-30 to testify, again he refused.

Juvenile offenders are dangerous and in Wayne County we treat the very seriously. We consider their age and the level of violence when we make a charging decision and when we made a plea offer. Consider the case of Eric Martin. Marin was 15 when, on August 25, 2007, he robbed and killed Darian Matthews, 18, at the Eagle Coney Island on Dexter street in Detroit. He killed Matthews for the victim's eyeglasses. The video shows that Martin shot the victim in the back, stood over him and shot him again. He then robbed him. This is a clear example of First Degree Murder, yet we

pled the case to Second Degree Murder with a sentence agreement. This is an example of how our office handles these cases. We balance the need to protect public safety and the background of the defendant.

There are many examples of Juvenile offenders that should be imprisoned for life. As the former Director of our Homicide Unit, I personally know of three defendants who were tried and convicted of murder as a juvenile, sentenced as juveniles, and were “rehabilitated”, and as adults committed multiple murders.

1. Damien Dorris Dorris committed his first murder when he was 12. He shot and killed a pregnant women at an ATM. He did this so that he could get money to go to McDonalds. After he was released from his juvenile placements, he committed no less than five murders

2. Jermaine Crowe Crowe killed George Ward a few days before his 17th birthday at a Coney Island and was sentenced as a juvenile. He was convicted of killing a witness and his girlfriend who testified against William Johnson.

3. Michael Skoefield. After being convicted of murder as a juvenile, he was involved the murder of four people and the assault of two others at a party store in Westland. He committed suicide after a high speed police chase.

LIFE OFFENDERS
THREE-YEAR COMPARISON
2006 - 2008

<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>
Automatic Waiver = 35	Automatic Waiver = 48	Automatic Waiver = 17
Adult Designation = 45	Adult Designation = 39	Adult Designation = 22
Juvenile = 165	Juvenile = 157	Juvenile = 129
Total = 245	Total = 244	Total = 168

